

## Panel 1: Collaborative projects that leverage resources & engage local officials

### **“Uniting Economic Development and Reclamation in Southwest Va.”**

Adam Wells, New Economy Program Manager, Appalachian Voices

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Repurposing abandoned mine lands for economic projects like industrial site development, solar facilities, outdoor recreation, and sustainable agriculture are project examples that are supported by local government leaders and citizens in southwest Virginia and beyond. Adam Wells is an eighth generation Wise County, Virginia resident and Appalachian Voices’ New Economy Program Manager. Mr. Wells will share the lessons learned from the 2016 study on [“Innovative Mine Reclamation.”](#) In partnership with engineering and economic analysis consultants, Appalachian Voices analyzed AML sites in far Southwest Virginia for economic development potential. The goal was to identify specific AML sites eligible for RECLAIM Act or other federal funding for remediation and development that can provide an economic benefit to the surrounding community. The approach considered innovative and outside-the-box strategies and extensive input from local and regional government officials. Scenarios and planning specifications included a solar farm on a reclaimed mine site powering a high-tech data center; a permaculture food production systems with a closed waste loop; and a town park replacing a dilapidated and abandoned coal processing facility. Appalachian Voices, along with universities, local government leaders, philanthropy, and community organizations, continue to facilitate opportunities for residents to become more engaged in sharing ideas and making decisions about their economic future. They’ve facilitated [community visioning forums](#) and collaborated with the higher education institutions and economic development agencies on annual “Economic Forums,” that attract hundreds of citizens, economic development experts, and others. Through these and other efforts, community based organizations demonstrate the potential to link local and regional leaders input on AML projects with state programs and the AML Pilot, as well as the need for visioning and site-specific scenario planning with an economic impact ‘lens.’

### **“How AML & Pilot funds can leverage Private Philanthropy on Economic Transition Efforts”**

Stephanie Randolph, Program & Grants Officer, blue moon fund

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Philanthropies and foundations in Appalachia co-fund economic and community development projects; leverage private & public dollars; build capacity and connect local & regional leaders; and support strategies that diversify coal-impacted communities in transition, often referred to as the Just Transition. When projects align with economic recovery goals, philanthropic organizations and foundations can help AML programs in Appalachia by contributing pre- or post-reclamation and restoration funding. In 2017 the Just Transition Fund was included in a \$3 million initiative by Bloomberg Philanthropies. With this new support, the Just Transition Fund and other funders can help scale innovative solutions to create jobs and new businesses, train workers, and replace lost tax revenue. This session will highlight the areas of potential overlap

for AML programs with philanthropy and economic diversification in central Appalachia. Stephanie Randolph, Program & Grants Officer with the blue moon fund, will share examples of promising practices and other resources from the region. Additionally, Ms. Randolph will discuss the potential to align grants and impact investing activity, which increasingly encourages investment from foundations and may also bring financial returns.

## PANEL 2: Partnerships That Extend AML Impact - Examples from Appalachia – Part I

### **“AML innovations and State-Local Partnerships in Southwestern Virginia”**

Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager, City of Norton

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*Note: Mr. Ramey will be co-presenting with a staff member of the regional division of the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals & Energy (DMME). The co-presenter will be confirmed soon, but was not confirmed before the deadline for this proposal.*

The City of Norton has a population of 3,958, making it the least populous city in Virginia, along with the westernmost city in the state. However, Norton is ‘on the map’ for many other exciting reasons. The city has invested heavily in recent years to enhance its infrastructure and other assets so that the city and region are known destinations for outdoor recreation and the burgeoning eco-tourism industry. When a tall embankment behind a busy street and sidewalk became unstable, the city built five terraced walls and freestanding walls to secure the steep slope. The City of Norton, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals & Energy (DMME) partnered to make this a safe, successful, and attractive project that welcomes residents and visitors to the city. In addition to stabilizing the slope and improving an area of abandoned mine land (AML), the project also provides a safe pedestrian connection between Norton Elementary & Middle School and Downtown Norton. The Norton River Walk is an ongoing project with a final vision of a park and a greenway trail to be built around and through an abandoned coal processing facility along the Guest River within the city limits. This session will highlight local-state partnerships on AML projects and the potential for AML project sites to be leveraged in economic transition efforts. Fred Ramey has served as the Norton City Manager since April 2012, and has been employed by the city since 1988. Fred holds a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of Virginia – Wise and a Masters of City/Public Management from East Tennessee State University.

## Panel 3: Partnerships That Extend AML Impact - Examples from Appalachia – Part II

### **“Keeping a Good Thing Going – 20 years of Rural Action, AmeriCorps, and More!”**

Marissa Lautzenheiser, Watershed Coordinator, Rural Action

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Restoration can be part of an overall portfolio of economic transition when it is connected to market-based opportunities like local, authentic tourism (sometimes called eco-tourism). Restoration makes it possible to have natural assets worth building tourism opportunities around. The eco-tourism industry is just beginning to build in parts of rural Appalachia, and community organizations, like Rural Action in Ohio, and AmeriCorps members, are key to helping build that momentum. Southeast Ohio contributes only 4% to the overall state tourism economy, but because of the relative size of its economy, it has a significant local impact. Southeast and Appalachian Ohio have the largest outdoor recreation areas, including Ohio's only national forest and numerous state parks and state forests. Rural Action, a regional, member-based nonprofit, annually facilitates the placement of twenty-six AmeriCorps members that work on eco-tourism and AMD restoration projects. The AmeriCorps members are part of the 8<sup>th</sup> year of the Ohio Stream Restore Corp, an initiative to restore watersheds, improve natural assets through trails and clean ups, provide environmental education, and promote a regional development and tourism strategy built on these assets across the coal mining region of Appalachian Ohio. At the end of each service year, AmeriCorps members leave behind improved, more visible, and cleaner natural sites on public and private lands, stronger partnerships, environmental education connecting students and communities to these assets, and volunteers engaged throughout it all. AmeriCorps members leveraged an additional 6500 volunteer hours and over \$100K for regional renewal. This panel shares Rural Action’s perspective on challenges and opportunities to developing eco-tourism with multiple stakeholders and how to leverage AmeriCorps members for restoration projects.

## Panel 4: Creating Young Leaders & Restoring Watersheds

### **“Building the Restoration Economy and A Generation of Reclamation Leaders”**

April Elkins, Director of Operations, Stewards Individual Placement Program, Bridge Network, 304-533-3265

Yolande Norman, Chief, Reclamation Support Division, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

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AmeriCorps members are placed with organizations working to mitigate the long term impacts of pre-regulatory mining on the economy and the ecology in Appalachian coal country and in Western hard rock mining areas. Stewards launched as the individual placement program of Conservation Legacy. Stewards operates both VISTA and AmeriCorps Members, which

spearhead several initiatives including OSMRE/VISTA, OSMRE AmeriCorps, DOI/VISTA, and TCU/VISTA, successfully placing over 600 AmeriCorps State and National and VISTA members across the U.S. and territories. We strive to create a better future for people and for the environment by supporting and investing in the next generation of leaders. These programs leverage the AmeriCorps VISTA program to bring multifaceted approach to engaging youth, alleviating poverty, and addressing environmental issues on AML.